



Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence

## Testimony Regarding

### HB 6997, AA Prohibiting Boards of Education from Disclosing Student Records to Parents or Guardians with Pending Domestic Violence Charges

#### Committee on Children February 14, 2019

#### Member Organizations

**The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services**

Ansonia, CT

**The Center for Family Justice**

Bridgeport, CT

**Women's Center**

Danbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program United Services**

Dayville, CT

**Network Against Domestic Abuse**

Enfield, CT

**Domestic Abuse Services**

Greenwich YWCA

Greenwich, CT

**Interval House**

Hartford, CT

**Chrysalis Domestic Violence Services**

Meriden, CT

**New Horizons**

Middletown, CT

**Prudence Crandall Center**

New Britain, CT

**The Umbrella Center for Domestic Violence Services**

New Haven, CT

**Safe Futures**

New London, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**

Norwalk, CT

**Women's Support Services**

Sharon, CT

**Domestic Violence Crisis Center**

Stamford, CT

**Susan B. Anthony Project**

Torrington, CT

**Safe Haven**

Waterbury, CT

**Domestic Violence Program**

United Services

Willimantic, CT

Good afternoon Senator Abrams, Representative Linehan and members of the committee. CT Coalition Against Domestic Violence (CCADV) is the state's leading voice for victims of domestic violence and those who serve them. Our 18 member organizations provide essential services to nearly 40,000 victims of domestic violence each year. Services provided include 24-hour crisis response, emergency shelter, safety planning, counseling, support groups and court advocacy.

We support the intent of the bill to protect the confidentiality of domestic violence survivors and their children. It can be traumatizing for a survivor who must leave an abusive situation and go to an undisclosed location to protect themselves and their children. It can be even more traumatizing when that location is disclosed to their abuser, including through access to their child's educational records.

Schools and Boards of Education may at times be aware that one parent of a student is a victim of domestic violence due to self-disclosure, and other times they may be unaware of that situation or any existing restraining or protective orders, as such orders are not publicly available in accordance with the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). However, regardless of a Board's knowledge of domestic violence impacting a student, their hands may be tied when requests for information are made because existing Connecticut law gives both parents, regardless of custody status, equal right to access educational records. Providing this information may inadvertently disclose the location of a survivor and their child. It is our understanding that this bill seeks to address this issue.

In developing a solution to this problem, we want to be mindful of any unintended consequences that solve a problem for one survivor, but create a problem for another survivor. CCADV does not support any policy that requires victims to disclose their status as a victim, nor those that would remove their privacy altogether by requiring the court to disclose restraining and protective orders to Boards of Education. Although again, such policy would likely be prohibited by VAWA.

CCADV is happy to work with the proponents of the bill to develop a potential solution that will provide a level of protection for survivors while maintaining their right to confidentiality. Thank you for your consideration and please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Liza Andrews

Director of Public Policy & Communications

[landrews@ctcadv.org](mailto:landrews@ctcadv.org)